2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

Nayar: Central Kerala

The Nayars, unlike the groups so far described, form only a part-society—a named category of castes within the social system of south-west India. An account of their kinship system therefore requires a sketch of the political and economic system in which they were embedded. It seems to have been the Nayars' role as a specialized occupational group within a complex society which accounted for the most unusual features of their kinship institutions.

The Nayars differ also from the other groups considered with regard to their relatively high level of technological development. At least from the first century A.D., Kerala's social structure was based upon plough agriculture with irrigation, specialized crafts, and overseas trade (K. M. Panikkar, 1945: 36). Productivity was sufficiently high so that more than one-quarter of the population could be exempted from manual labor and set apart as specialist, literate groups engaged in religion, government, warfare, and wholesale trade. The Nayars, as the ruling and military castes, formed the core of this aristocracy and probably comprised between one-quarter and one-fifth of the total population.[1]

Partly as a result of direct legal changes brought about since the British conquest of 1792, and, more deeply, as a result of the change to an industrial fuel technology, the Nayar system of matrilineal groups has been gradually disintegrating over the past hundred years. Some of the traditional functions of these matrilineal units are being taken over by the elementary family and by the wider, personal, bilateral kindred of each individual. Other former functions of matrilineal groups have passed to such modern bureaucratic institutions as government, army, law court, and school. Because this book is a comparative study of matrilineal systems, I shall concentrate on Nayar lineages and kinship in the "traditional" period before the British

[1] Buchanan estimated the population density of Central Kerala at 100 per square mile in 1800 (1807, II: 501). The density for Cochin State was 814 per square mile in 1931 (Census of India, Cochin State, 1931).

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Caste and Territorial Divisions

THE HIGH CASTES

564 *The Nambudiri Brahmans* Throughout Kerala the Nambudiri Brahmans were the highest Hindu caste and the ritual and scholastic leaders. Today they form one hundredth of the population (Censuses of Madras, Cochin, and Travancore, 1931). Carriers of the Sanskrit language and of ancient Vedic culture, they are thought to have entered Malabar from the eastern plateau sometime after the fall of the Chera kingdom (Logan, 1951, I: 121; 243; Ayyar, 1938: 47). Most Nambudiris were landlords of substance, but they included a number of ranked occupational sub-castes of varying wealth. The greater landlords were managers of large temples, promulgators of religious law, legal advisers of the kings, priests of public sacrifices, or philosophers and Vedic scholars. The lower sub-castes, whose members owned smaller estates, included temple priests, physicians, and household priests and professional cooks who officiated at ceremonies in the Nayar castes.

564 The Nambudiris ranked ritually above the kings and were to some extent above and outside the political systems of the kingdoms. Alone of all the castes, they moved unmolested between enemy kingdoms. They held ceremonies attended by their caste fellows from all parts of Kerala and carried on their system of intra-caste administration independently of the administration of justice within the kingdoms. For the latter purpose they divided Kerala into *gramams* (caste areas) (Logan, 1951, I: 120). Over the whole region a dignitary called the Aravancheri Tamburakkal, who lived in the Calicut kingdom, was universally acknowledged as the ritual and administrative leader of the Nambudiris (Buchanan, 1807: 423–426; Ayyar, 1938: 23). He held the right to install the kings of both Calicut and Cochin, even though these rulers were traditionally at enmity. The field of social relations of the Nambudiris was thus the whole of Kerala and they played a role not dissimilar to that of the medieval Catholic church. Descent among the Nambudiris was patrilineal.

564 613 635 *The High-Caste Nayars* Below the Nambudiri Brahmans in ritual rank came the royal *matrilineages* of the several kingdoms. Those in Central Kerala were Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. Although of Nayar origin, each of these lineages considered itself superior in ritual rank to the Nayar subjects within its kingdom. Between kingdoms, royal lineages disputed for rank and would not intermarry. Although exogamous, therefore, each royal lineage considered

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563 [162] The Christians of Kerala numbered about 20 per cent of the population in 1931. The Syrian Christians, the most ancient and numerous group, may be descended from Persian Nestorians; they were trading on the coast at least by 525 A.D. (McCrindle, 1897: 119). Christians [65] were and are concentrated in Travancore and Cochin. They received land grants near the ports and enjoyed virtual self-government provided they paid taxes to the kings (Logan, 1951, I: 260–270; III: cxxi–cxxvi). As landlords, tenants, and administrators—as well as traders—they ranked socially parallel to the Nayars and were served in the same manner by Hindu polluting castes and serfs. Their trade declined after the Arabs became dominant on the coast, and some of them began to serve in the royal armies along with Nayars. The Portuguese converted some Syrians to Roman Catholicism, but the converts still retained the Syriac rite. All Syrians were readily distinguishable from the lower-ranking Latin Catholics, converts to Catholicism from Portuguese times who were drawn from various polluting castes.

The Economic System

438 The principles of reciprocity and redistribution,[4] rather than of market trade, dominated the village economy until toward the mid-nineteenth [564] century. In villages, castes were characterized by hereditary occupations and correspondingly by hereditary, differential rights in the [463] produce of village lands (Logan, 1951, I: 110–112, 269, 270, 599–600, 623). The village landlord and the Nayar tenants were the main redistributive agents, collecting in goods from the lower orders and [592] redistributing them in customary shares. In all village economic transactions, *households*, and not whole caste groups or individuals, were the units of interaction.

471 The village landlord's household "owned" almost all the land in the village. "Ownership" meant both more and less than modern Western 592 landownership (Logan, 1951, I: 602–603). The landlord might not sell 566 his land without the consent of the king or of a chief, and sale was restricted to families of appropriate caste. He might not evict his tenants, village servants, or serfs without their consent unless they committed grave crime (*ibid.*, I: 607). On the other hand, the landlord's ownership included judicial rights over the village population.

The landlord retained a portion of the land as his private domain for cultivation by his serfs. The rest was held by Nayar retainer households as non-cultivating tenants (*kānakkar*). The tenant's household

[4] For an analysis of the general operation of these principles in the Indian village economy, see Neale, 1957: 218–236.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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[553]

Nâyar is affixed as an honorific after the name. Thus one whose name is Gôvindan is called Gôvindan Nâyar.

Taravâd name.	Name.	Occupation.	Age
Manjôli	Gôvindan	Domestic servant ...	30
Kêdôth	Karunâkaran ...	Milk seller	34
Chuliotkolodi ...	Ithapu	Cultivator	32
Puliakôth	Kêlu	Do.	27
Kurunthal	Narrâinan	Do.	35
Kazhaparambath ...	Shankaren	Do.	32
Etalakandiel	Kêlu	Servant	22
Thanikât	Cherukutti	Do.	25
Thattatath	Chekkunni	Peon	35
Nambidivîttil	Kunhunni	Cultivator	50
Nadaviladatha	Chandukutti ...	Do.	25
Tuthenvîttil	Vêlu	Writer	24
Thekakamukal	Râmuni	Cultivator	22
Kulangarathathil ...	Kannan	Do.	37
Kizhukalangot	Gôvindan	Do.	25
Pîtôli	Râmuni	Do.	36
Puliakôth	Kôman	Do.	25
Edakapura	Râvappan	Peon	46

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There seems to be a distinct or specific name for every garden, every acre of land in Malabar, whether in the forest or cultivated, whether enclosed or not. We shall hear of this again when we come to speak of the jungle people, some of whom change their name, their *house* or Taravâd name, as they change their residence from one place to another, always calling themselves after the land on which they are at the time living. Others again cling to the name which is that of the land whence the family has sprung, so to speak.

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That the Taravâd name of the Nâyar is that of the land is tolerably evident. Contrary to the rule in Southern India there is, in Malabar, absolute proprietorship of land; and the land, the family house built on it, the land wherein lie the ashes of the ancestors, and the family itself are all included in the meaning of the word Taravâd.

ÛRÂLI NÂYARS: ENDOGAMOUS.

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Ages ranging between 20 and 45.	Maximum.	Minimum.	Averages of 25.	To stature = 100.	Remarks
Stature	180·8	152·2	163·1	...	
Height, sitting	89·9	79·1	84·2	51·6	
Do. kneeling ...	135·3	113·3	• 120·8	74·0	• 120·75
Span	193·0	161·7	171·3	105·0	

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*564 silver earrings called kalluvechcha kadukkan which means an earring set with stone (pushyarâgam—topaz).

(1) Three plain golden rings on ring finger of left hand, the same on the little finger of the same hand, and a thin iron ring on the ring finger of the right hand.

[302] (2) Sandal paste patch over glabella; four stripes of the same on chest; three vertical stripes on each upper arm.

(3) Three golden earrings—the usual kadukkans—
[789] in each ear. An amulet in a silver cylindrical case worn on the waist. Inside the case is a charm written on a copper leaf. It is to protect its wearer against the influences of the evil eye.

(4) One tambâk, one plain gold ring on ring finger of the right hand.

[304] (5) Ears pierced. Wears no earrings as he has no money. A dab of sandal paste over the glabella, another over the sternum, and on each shoulder.

163 *Prolificness.*—The clan being endogamous, it will be well to note here the number of children born in 16 fami-
*564 lies of those examined. In all there were born 44 male and 35 female children; altogether 79. This gives an average of 4·9 in each family; and of those there were living at the time an average of 4·6 for each family. A figure which is above the average for the Nâyars as a body, be it noted.

141 It is perhaps scarcely worth noting that the average weight of four men was 119 lb.

Names of some of those examinad.

Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
613 *564 Mêlapalli ...	Kêlu Nâyar ...	Cooly ...	22
● 463 Kanjôli ...	Râman Nâyar ...	Writer ...	22
Kurundottathil...	Krishnan Nâyar ...	Do. ...	20
551 Puthukûdi ...	Achutan Nâyar ...	Trade ...	22
Ponmilli ...	Krishnan Nâyar ...	Do. ...	45
115 Kuttakil ...	Râman Nâyar ...	Cooly ...	32
Payarvîtil ...	Aiyappen Nâyar ...	Mason ...	36
Pûvakunial ...	Châthu Nâyar ...	Cultivator ...	26
Kalathil ...	Shangaran Nâyar ...	Cooly ...	25
Korolath ...	Shangunni Nâyar ...	Do. ...	22
Pallithotathil ...	Gôpalan Nâyar ...	Nothing ...	22
Kûtakkil ...	Râman Nâyar ...	Cooly ...	30
Thondil ...	Appa Nâyar ...	Writer ...	20

551 Thondi or Thundi was, I think, mentioned by one of the ancient geographers as a port near where this last man lived. This man, therefore, bears the name of the place as it was, probably, in the days of Ptolemy.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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142 *564 *Colour of the skin* (*Broca's colour types*).—The fairest was No. 40 (one only); and the two next fairest were 30 to 44 and 39 to 44. The darkest was 43. The average seems to be a little darker than 29 but not so dark as 28. Darker than the Kiriyattil.

Colour of the eyes (Broca).—The colour of the eyes of half the number was as No. 1, and that of the other half as No. 2. One exception was between Nos. 1 and 10. The average therefore is a dark brown; not black.

301 *564 [304] *Ornaments.*—Ears pierced, and the usual earrings (kadukkans) worn by those who can afford them. In one case the earrings were set with a red stone. The ornaments or adornments of various individuals were as follows:—

(1) Bell metal ring on the ring finger of right hand.

(2) Two brass rings on ring finger of right hand. A string of wool thrice round the right wrist to keep off fever at night.

(3) Tattooed circular mark over glabella. The operator was a woman of the Chetti caste, a travelling tattooer, and the cost of the operation 2 pies.

[515] [789] (4) One gold kadukkan in each ear. Two copper rings on ring finger of right hand. Washing the face with a hand wearing a copper ring removes black spots on the face, and prevents them coming. So said the wearer.

(5) Two amulets, silver cylindrical cases containing mantrams, worn on a string round the waist to keep off fever and devils. Amulet cases are often worn on the waist in the way of ornament pure and simple.

163 *564 *Prolificness.*—In 12 families the children born were 29 males and 34 females, or an average of 5·2 children to each family.

141 The average weight of 4 individuals was 119½ lb.

The names of some of those examined.

	Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
551	Blathâdi	Govindan	Cultivator	40
*564	Râvâri Chandil ...	Kêlu	Do.	22
	Palôli	Kunju	Do.	25
463	Murikolipôil ...	Shangaran	Trader	21
115	Kuttadath ...	Krishnan	Writer	20
	Thaikandi ...	Appu	Cooly	26
	Thazhathadathil ...	Châthu	Do.	24
	Erankulangara ...	Kittan	Milk seller	25
	Vêlashêri	Cherukoman	Cultivator	40
	Chêlattumal ...	Kunhunni	Cooly	44
	Patavetti	Châthukutti	Cultivator	62

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*301/564 Copper sheet on which the charm was inscribed in a silver cylindrical case. Copper ring on ring-finger, right hand.

(2) Two copper rings on the ring-finger, right hand. Belongs to the Ellenkiria, so wore no earrings.

(3) Brass ring, ring-finger, right hand. Also of the Ellenkiria.

(4) Copper ring, ring-finger, right hand. Gold earrings of the ordinary pattern.

(5) The ordinary gold earrings. Silver string round the waist; not exclusively ornamental. He fastened his loin cloth to it.

*163/564 *Vital Statistics* were noted in but two cases. In one family there were two brothers and three sisters; in another, one brother and two sisters.

Names, etc., of a few Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
115 *564 Puthen Vîtil	Krishnan	Cultivator	52
Parithil	Achutan	Do.	27
613 Malabîtil	Sivarâman	Do.	22
Cholale	Râman	Do.	20
551 Muthira	Narrâyanan	Teacher	26
● 463 Kanakath	Kunhi Krishnan* ...	Unemployed ...	22
Mannareth	Shangaran	Trader	30
Kûmbiyal	Kannan	Peon	25
Othianmâdattil ...	Gôvindan	Do.	33

NAMBIYÂR NÂYARS.

*553/564 Men of this clan affix Nambiyâr to their name. Thus, Gôvindan Nambiyâr, Kêlu Nambiyâr.

Ages ranging between 20 and 40.	Maximum.	Minimum.	Averages of 22.	To stature = 100.
141 *564 Stature	177·1	155·7	165·1	...
Height, sitting	89·3	80·0	84·2	51·0
Do. kneeling	129·8	115·0	121·0	73·9
Span	188·0	166·5	175·3	106·2
Chest	84·0	75·0	80·3	48·6
Shoulders	42·8	37·8	40·0	424·2
Left cubit	50·5	43·6	46·0	27·9

* This individual had 'Menon' instead of Nâyar after his name, he having been invested with the distinction by the Zamorin.

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*115
564 Names, etc., of some of those who were examined are given below:—
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Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
Pathushêri	Kanâran ...	... Rent Collector (for a temple).	22
Mâvila	Kumâran ...	... Cultivator	21
Châlayil Kandôth ...	Châttu ...	... .	22
Puthiotil	Râman ...	... Servant	22
Chalil Kannôth ...	Anandan ...	... Cultivator	25
Ramath	Kunhi Râman	... Landlord	34
Kalliat-panôli ...	Râmuni ...	... Stamp vendor ...	30
Thêrugandi	Paidal ...	... Cultivator	25

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PURATTU CHÂRNA NÂYARS.

Men of this clan bear the affix Nâyar after their name, as Gôvindan Nâyar, Gôpâla Nâyar.

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Ages ranging between 20 and 70.	Maximum.	Minimum.	Averages of 25.	To stature = 100.
Stature	174·8	155·0	166·1	...
Height, sitting	92·4	77·7	85·3	51·3
Do. kneeling	130·2	113·7	122·7	73·9
Span	184·1	155·6	174·0	104·7
Chest	87·6	69·7	79·6	47·9
Shoulders	43·9	33·3	39·6	23·9
Left cubit	49·1	42·0	45·8	27·6
Left hand length	19·3	16·8	18·5	11·1
Do. width	8·3	6·5	7·9	...
Do. middle finger	11·6	9·8	10·5	6·3
Hips	28·0	23·8	25·7	15·5
Left foot length	27·4	22·3	25·3	15·2
Do. width	9·9	7·4	8·7	...
Cephalic length	20·6	17·6	19·5	11·7
Do. width	15·5	12·9	14·5	...
Do. index	81·5	65·2	72·2	...
Bigoniac	11·1	9·3	10·3	...
Bizygomatic	13·9	11·7	13·0	...
Maxillo-zygomatic index	88·8	73·9	79·5	...
Nasal height	5·2	4·0	4·8	2·88
Do. width	3·9	2·9	3·6	2·17
Do. index	90·0	56·9	76·8	...
Vertex to tragus	14·4	12·2	13·1	7·9
Do. to chin	21·1	17·5	19·8	11·9
Middle finger to patella	17·5	5·3	10·7	6·44

Cephalic length.—In 8 individuals or 32 per cent. of the whole, the cephalic length was 20·0 or over. The maximum cephalic width (of one individual only) is abnormal; the next nearest to it is 14·8. In 6 individuals the nasal

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one occasion he was frightened when near water, and subsequently was troubled by beings called Pûtams, devils of a very inferior kind which haunt water. He had bad dreams, so consulted a Mâppila priest (a Musalian—a priest of sorts) who gave him the mantrams. Wore also a charm—"to entice the public" as he explained, so that people will, as a rule, like him, please him, flatter rather than annoy him. He got this too from a Mâppila priest—a Mullah.

(3) Aged 24. This man had travelled. At Dvâraka the city of Krishna, the ninth incarnation of Vishnu (in the Kulluva peninsula), a chank above and a chakkra below had been branded on his left upper arm, on his right, a chank above and a lotus below. Each forearm bore the branded mark of an indistinct seal said to represent Krishna, testifying to a visit to the temple at Dharnidara. Had been to Benares and worshipped his ancestors at Gaya (throwing their ashes into the Ganges), an operation which at once removes all necessity to give them any further attention.

Prolificness.—In 9 families, in respect of which notes were taken, there were born altogether 48 children, 30 male and 18 female, or about 53 children to each family.

Following the rule, or rather custom, which governs all marital connexions amongst the Nâyars, a woman of this clan may be mated with a man of the same clan, or with a man of the Kiriyattil clan, but with no other clan. Consequently, a man of this clan cannot be mated with a Kiriyattil woman, for the woman can never mate with one who is not at least her equal.

Names of some of those examined.

Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
Kizhâk Vellat ...	Kundu	Cultivator	42
Panôli	Konti	Do.	22
Karuthôdiyil ...	Gôvindan Kutti ...	Head of his family ...	21
Vellât	Gôpâlan	Cultivator	24
Pudieth	Kanaran	Schoolmaster	23
Puttikapureth ...	Kelukkutti Menon* ...	Writer	36
Karumuthil ...	Kandar, *alias* Kunja Panikkar.* ...	Cultivator	70
Pâlat	Râma Panikkar ...	Do.	56
Kâkkât	Gôvindan	Do.	20

* The affix (Panikkar, Menon) is a title, not necessarily but possibly hereditary.

Note.—I find I have noted one man as Viyyâr Purattu Châma, as if Viyyûr is a sub-clan, and that he marries in his own sub-clan; but I am not sure whether the Purattu Châmas are so sub-divided, and think not.

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(2) Aged 32. Four gold earrings in each ear. One "tambâk" ring on ring finger of left hand. A ring made of a bit of wire picked up on the road worn on the ring finger of left hand.

(3) Two gold earrings, set with a red stone, in each ear. Wears an amulet, contained in the ordinary cylindrical amulet case; but I have not noticed what the amulet itself actually is. He used to be much troubled by a devil, the departed spirit of an east-country Brâhman who died by drowning. He wore the charm to keep this gentleman off.

(4) Aged 24. A silver girdle worn, instead of a string, to which the languti is tied. An iron ring on the 3rd toe of the left foot. Rings are very rarely worn on the toes by any people in Malabar. All over the rest of the Madras Presidency they are, of course, common.

(5) Aged 39. Three earrings, of the usual pattern in each ear. A ring called an elephant's ring, made of silver, in which is arranged circularly a piece of the hair of an elephant's tail, worn on the ring finger of the left hand. There is one of these rings in my collection.

Names, etc., of a few are given—

Taravâd.	Name.	Occupation.	Age.
Pilathottathil ...	Thêyyan Mênon ...	Amshom Mênon or writer. ...	44
Potishêri	Unikkandan ...	Post runner	31
Valia parambath ...	Râman	Peon	20
Chatho Vîtil	Vêlappa Mênon ...	Servant	26
Chandrethil	Kuttan	Do.	22
Earat	Krishnan	Cartman	39
Kanjôli	Shangara Mênon ...	Writer in a temple ...	34
Kôlangyarath ...	Chandu	Cooly	36

This last-named individual was measured in the Cannanore Jail, in which institution he, a prisoner himself, filled the office of hangman. He had hanged 10 men in the jail, and, at the rate of 2 rupees a case, he was owed 20 rupees; a nice little sum, which he would be given when leaving the jail at the expiration of his sentence. I was surprised to find a man of the Nâyar caste filling the office of hangman, so enquired the reason and was informed he had put aside the caste scruples while in jail. The office was in its way lucrative, and, when he emerged into freedom, no one would be the wiser, and he would have twenty and odd rupees in his pocket. He did not mind violating certain principles of his caste, doing that which is derogatory, so long as no one knew; but he *did* mind being found out.

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with high and noble peaks. These shut the Nāyar country entirely out of the rest of India and have helped to a very great extent to preserve the peculiar customs of marriage and relationships of Malabar. The monsoon which these Ghats receive makes Malabar the most picturesque part of India, an ever green country with lofty trees, luxuriant vegetation, noble rivers and magnificent lakes. There is nowhere a place which so much approximates to the description of

> "Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
> Breadths of tropic shade and cluster knots of paradise;
> Droops the heavy blossomed bower, hangs the heavy fruited tree,
> Summer isles of Eden lying in the purple sphere of sea."

The extreme fertility of the valley and the rich tropical luxuriance of the forest have made life extremely easy, which even the importation of machines, mills, and factories has not been able entirely to change. Malabar is to a great extent, therefore, a land of idleness, and I may say of intellectual culture, for nowhere is learning, art, and poetry so much esteemed as among the Nampudiris and Nāyars of Malabar.

There are various reasons to believe that the Nāyars were very early comers in this place.[1] That they were not the aboriginal inhabitants of the place is evident from the fact that all over Malabar, from Mangalore to Cape Camorin, Nāyar families possess agricultural serfs who are distinctly of the negroid type. The Nāyars are a Dravidian race whose culture has only been superficially influenced by the Aryan immigration; of this more later.

The other communities of Malabar among whom the Nāyars live, are the Nampudiris, the Tiyas and the Pulayas. The Nampudiris are Brahmin landlords whose intercourse with and influence on the Nāyars we shall have to consider in detail later. A few families of Kshatriyas form the petty royalty of Malabar. The Tiyas are toddy drawers, people who are free men in theory but still show traces of serfdom in their relation with Nāyars, living as their tenants and doing their work for them. And the Pulayas, who till lately were slaves on whom was built up the agricultural life of the country. There are innumerable minor tribes, but they are small communities differentiated on the basis of their profession, like the Kanyans (astrologers), Asaris (carpenters), etc.

In this order Nāyars come next to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas and have precedence over all other castes. They are considered generally as a Dravidian variety of the Aryan Kshatriyas, which is, however, absolutely spurious in theory and is true only in so far as their *de facto* position is concerned. Any way, they form the feudal aristocracy of Malabar. Burke on a famous occasion classed them with

[1] See note at the end of the essay, on "The Origin of the Word Nāyars," Appendix. Note I.

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

241 market. All that is necessary is grown in the compound. The great difficulty of village life, effective sanitation, becomes an easy matter.

241 56 Rice cultivation is still based on serf-labour. The Pulayas were the slaves of Nāyars till nearly fifty years ago, when slavery was abolished. But the abolition of slavery has only changed the legal status of the Pulaya. He still remains a landless labourer effectively bound by his former chains, by the great social barrier of caste and the greater difficulty of poverty and ignorance. The Pulaya is an agricultural labourer and nothing else. As long as he remains attached to one family he receives certain sums of money in times of distress, pieces of cloth and food on auspicious occasions, extra payment at childbirth, etc. He loses all this for an insecure wage and a nominal freedom if he leaves his old master. The Pulayas, therefore, have mostly remained serfs in spite of the abolition of slavery.

241 In fertile districts the ordinary methods of cultivation are followed. In the less fertile parts the system of leaving the farms fallow in alternate years, or occasionally once in three years, is followed.

241 796 The harvest time is between April and May. Naturally the gayest part of the Nāyar year is in May and June. The great festivals of all the temples from one end of Malabar to another fall in this part of the year. The festival in a temple extends to ten days, but the last two days are the most important. Very seldom these festivals overlap, and therefore for two full months the Nāyars enjoy an almost uninterrupted carnival. In these places poets from the length and breadth of Malabar come to meet their confrères, artists to exhibit their work, musicians to display their art, astrologers to practise their tricks, in short anybody who has wares to exhibit or sell. No one below a Nāyar in the hierarchy of caste can go to these places. They are, of course, admitted and entertained free. In some places even the food is supplied by the temple. The greatest of all these festive occasions is the *Puram* at Trichur, in Cochin State, which falls at the end of April or the beginning of May. Then there is the *Astamay* at Vaikom a little earlier in the year.

463 [441] The Nāyars, as we noticed at the beginning, are mainly an agricultural people; but a good many of them also go into trade. There are in these days Nāyars very high in Indian commercial circles.

The educated people generally choose the learned professions. In medicine, in law, in journalism, and in public life, they have been very successful. Especially in journalism it is interesting to note that a fair percentage of the editorial staff of the papers in India, whether European or Indian, is drawn from them. The only Indian member of the Viceroy's Cabinet is a Nāyar gentleman, Sir C. Sankaran Nāyar.

434 *Distribution of Wealth, Poverty, etc.*—The distribution of wealth among the Nāyars does not show the same great inequality as among other communities of India. There are moderately rich families having an average income of £10,000 a year, but extreme poverty is unknown. This is mostly due to two reasons:

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

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Internal structure of the caste.

Caste assigns to each individual his profession or calling; and when once the system is handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation, it is found impossible for any person or his descendants to change for any other the condition of life which the law assigns to him. The most far-sighted and prudent men in ancient times probably found such an institution to be the only means for maintaining a system of civilisation amongst a people endowed with the peculiar characteristics of the Hindus.

The important principle which guided all ancient legislators was, that no man in the commonwealth should be left without work. At the same time, they knew that the people were indolent by nature. They were further aware of the fact that, unless every individual was duly provided with some work, for which he might be best fited, the social fabric must necessarily fall to pieces. The law-givers therefore established durable and inviolable rules for the different castes constituting the Hindu race; the violation of which brings divine displeasure, and meets with severe punishment both in this world and in the world to come.

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It is some such guiding principle that is involved in the division of the Nayars into various sub-castes. In Kerala the Brahmans seem to have been instrumental in the formation of castes to some extent; for, it is found that some castes have to do services in temples to Brahmans. Distinct professional groups in the tribal organisations may have existed there before the advent of these people, who probably found it easy to make a ready adjustment of the social groups, and thought it advisable to assign to them well defined occupations. Therefore, the original institution of the caste system does not merit any serious condemnation.

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Some are of opinion that it is not quite correct to say that the Nayars are a caste, and that it would be better to call them a tribe, as Bhattacharya has done in his 'Castes and Sects'. I am however inclined to think that the name is not quite appropriate, and that they do form a caste of people, known as Malayali Sudras.

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In regard to subdivisions, there is no uniformity. So numerous and varied are they in Cochin, Malabar, and Travancore, that titles of distinction that have been conferred upon

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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Nayar

[P. 97]

CHAPTER V.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

Occupation.

Among the high caste Nayars, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste, and as a relic of it, the small force of infantry maintained by the State is still known by the name of the ancient military caste of Kerala. Aristocratic military leaders of the feudal ages, who then derived their incomes chiefly from landed property, in these times of uninterrupted peace and tranquillity, are but shadows of their former state. Some of them are almost penniless, and while a few families maintain their ancient position, most of them have lost prestige and influence. Among the lower classes of Nayars, there are sub-castes who by occupation were potters, weavers, oil-mongers, and copper-smiths; but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations, and even consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation. This is partly due to the acquisition of wealth by a number of the caste-men, and partly to their attempts to rise in the social scale by engaging themselves in other walks of life. There are again some classes (*Illakkars* or *Sudras*) of Nayars who rendered personal services to the Nambuthiris or to their own community, and the tendency has been to discontinue the services and take to other more respectable calling.

The Nayars numbered 1,11,837 at the last Census, and of these, 28,786 are agriculturists. These include tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, growers of special products and those connected with agricultural training and forests. Very few take to manufacture and trade. The sentiments generated by the old feudalism, a rigid conservatism of caste and their residence in rural areas account for it to a great extent.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

3. THE PEOPLE

The new State is one of the most densely populated in the whole of India, as well as one in which the percentage of literacy is highest. Unfortunately no current statistics are available, as Kerala is of very recent creation, but some idea can be gained from the fact that in the Ponani taluk of the former district of Malabar, according to the Madras Government Statistical Atlas, 1935, there were 626,500 inhabitants, or 1,471 per square mile. The rate of increase of the population is also very rapid: about 11% every ten years. The percentage of education is highest in Travancore, Cochin. In 1951, 53.8% were reported literate (*Census of India*, Vol. xii).

The people of Kerala are a very complex collection and it would be hopeless to attempt to give a full and detailed description of them. The reader is referred to those works on the subject which have already been published, the titles of some of which can be found in the Bibliography. In order to understand, however, the extraordinary way in which Kerala society is partitioned into a number of individual groups, and how each of these has its own particular customs and ways, as for instance polyandry, it is essential to give a general idea of the different castes and subcastes which compose the population, with a brief outline of their social organization and professional occupations.

Rather naturally, as is to be expected from the mythological version of the origins of the country mentioned above, the summit of the hierarchy is occupied by the *Nambudri Brahmin*. As W. Logan very aptly puts it in his *Malabar* (Madras, 1887): "His person is holy; his directions command, his movements are a procession; his meals nectar; he is the holiest of human beings, the representative of God on earth." (p. 127). There are eight subdivisions to the caste, some more holy than others, by reason of the occupations which they pursue. Other Brahmins in Malabar, who have come from outside and are thus somewhat looked down upon, are the Pattars, Embrandiris, Tamil and Konkani Brahmins.

Below this exalted strata of Kerala society come the *Ambalavasis* or temple attendants, of whom there exist roughly nine subdivisions. With them are to be classed the self-styled *Kshattriyas* and the *Samantans*, from whose ranks are drawn the flower of the former military aristocracy. The Malayalam maharajas and rajas all belong to this class, as does the family of the Zamorin of Calicut.

In immediate succession are the *Nayars*, Sudras by caste, descendants of those easterners whom Parasu Raman brought in for the protection

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

of the Brahmins. There are something like sixty four subdivisions of these people, from those ranking highest, in north Malabar, to the non-military, low caste ones of the south and of the Palghat taluk. Because of their very close relation to the Nambudri Brahmins which I shall describe below in detail, it can hardly be said that the Nayars are equal in caste to Sudras elsewhere in India. This is no doubt the reason for which, not only is their true position in the Hindu caste scale generally overlooked, but also why they themselves have a proud and self-assured bearing quite unlike that of the fourth and lowest caste in other parts of the country.

With the Nayars, the end of the list of caste Hindus is reached. Below come the *outcastes* who, despite their condition, are also graded in accordance with rank. First of these are the Tiyas. These bear different names in the various parts of Kerala, but there seems to be general agreement that they are really all one and the same people. Thus the name Tiya seems reserved for them in north Malabar with the exception perhaps of former north Cochin (Thiyyas); in Palghat, they are known as Iruvans, in south Malabar as Thandans and some as Irava-Panikkars; in south Cochin and north Travancore as Chovans, while in the rest of Travancore they go by the generic name of Iravas (sometimes spelt Izhuvas).

Next are the artisans or Kammalans of which there are properly only four main subdivisions. Their associates, also artisans and craftsmen, are roughly grouped into fourteen different communities.

The Kammalans are followed by another category composed of farm-hands, the Cherumas and Pulayas, and a dozen or so different kinds of aboriginals, jungle and hill folk who are rarely encountered on the coast or in the cultivated area, and have to be sought for in the foothills and jungles of the Western Ghats.

Non-Hindu inhabitants of Kerala include Moslems and Christians, of whom the greater number belong to the first of these two religious communities. They are both known locally as Mappillas, the first as Jonaka Mappillas and the others as Nasrani Mappillas. It is from this name, meaning "mother's son" or "bridegroom" or again "great child", that the more familiar *Mopla* for the Kerala Mohammedans has been coined. All are of the Sunni persuasion, while the Christians belong to a great number of varied denominations; some of them are Roman Catholic (the majority), others "Romo-Syrian" (Uniat), Orthodox Syrian, Malankara Syrian, Assyro-Chaldean (Nestorian), Mar Thomas, and of the Protestant United Church of south India.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 563 [095] There is a small community of Jews in Cochin, divided into White, Brown, and Black, the last named being the most numerous. Other Kerala residents are foreigners such as Canarese, Tamils, Arabs, and Europeans.

105 564 783 Untouchability has been made a penal offence by the present Indian Constitution and there is undoubtedly a tendency among the more enlightened in the country to combat its evils and attempt to eradicate it from modern Hindu society. On the other hand, the religious minded (and there are many) maintain that since the Constitution is a secular one and allows full freedom of religious belief and practice, the legislator cannot interfere in questions of caste and untouchability, as these have to do with the religious law and structure of India. The fact is that, today, untouchability is not what it was, but it cannot be said either that it has been done away with altogether. A visitor to Kerala is certainly immediately made aware of this, as many traditional views on what constitutes intercaste pollution and what does not are still very much in evidence. Thus, although a member of the artisan caste, a [084] Kammalan, perhaps no longer pollutes those above him in the hierarchy, [264] atmospherically, at twenty four feet as he used to do, it is nevertheless unthinkable that he should sit down to a meal of cooked rice with a [463] Nambudri, or even for that matter with a Nayar. The aboriginal Nay- [484] adis who still live off begging and hunting may possibly "come into [084] town" now and not have to keep off the roads for fear of polluting other castes merely by being seen within a distance of seventy four feet, but they are not for that admitted to a would-be reformed Indian community in which no distinctions of caste, creed and colour are made any longer; in fact, they themselves, probably out of some sort of perverse attachment to their powers of polluting, refuse to be rehabilitated – as has been attempted by the former government of Travancore – and prefer to carry on with their traditional way of life.

It can thus be safely said that pollution of the higher castes by the lower is very much believed in and guarded against, even in Kerala [841] today. Menstruating women, and also those who have given birth, are [846] still considered to be unclean for a period, varying with the people to whom they belong. And the various kin groups, of which every indiv- [614] idual is a member among the Hindus of Kerala, will equally be con- [846] sidered unclean and polluting for a certain amount of days – diminishing [065] in number in inverse proportion to the height of the caste – after a birth or a death has taken place.

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-

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Respect towards a superior, towards a God, towards a respected Parent, or towards the higher casteman, was always shown in Kerala by not wearing anything in his presence above the waist, be one man or woman. Basically, this has changed but little, the Nambudri Brahmin always praying in his private temple with only a loin cloth on, the modern Tiya factory girl now removing the blouse which she has taken to wearing before some important personage of her kin group, so that her breasts are exposed. What is a less frequent sight nowadays is Nayar, Tiya or Kammalan women in the streets and on the roads without some covering over the upper parts of their bodies. Lower caste people, however, Cherumas, Pulayas and aboriginals, being less affected by progress, are still to be seen on the highways, their shapely bodies exposed from the waist upwards.

A striking phenomenon in Kerala is the coexistence, even today, of the two radically opposed systems of *marumakkathayam* (matriliny) and of *makkathayam* (patriliny). In the first, children are born into their mother's caste, while in the other they are born into their father's caste. Inheritance is through the mother's brother in the first instance, and through the father in the second. The matrilineal people are grouped in matrilineal clans called *tarawads*, of which the senior male member, the *karanavan*, is the recognized head; the patrilineal people have patrilineal clans called by the same name, *tarawad*, also with the senior male as the *karanavan*, but at the same time, they observe descent through the mother, and all are members of matrilineal descent groups known as *illams* or *kiriyams*. While castes and, strictly speaking, subcastes are in principle endogamous, clans and lineages are definitely exogamous, marriage being matrilocal in the case of matrilineal people and patrilocal in the case of patrilineal people.[1]

Of the high castes, only the Nambudri Brahmins are *makkathayam*. They have patrilineal *gothras* or lineages which are exogamous, and patrilineal clans like *tarawads* which they, however, call *illams*. In olden days, only the eldest son could contract a regular marriage within his caste, marriage being polygamous and patrilocal. The younger sons were either expected to live as *brahmacharyas* (bachelor religious devotees) or could cohabit with Nayar women in a form of union known as *sambandham* to which we shall revert in a moment. They were maintained by their own efforts (they generally became cooks) and by a meagre allowance from the family *illam*. This has now been changed by

[1] I continue to make use of the terms *matrilocal* and *patrilocal* here, rather than *uxorilocal* and *virilocal* as still being perfectly adequate as they were for Ceylon previously.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 also have to be paid for, if they do not wish to be summarily evicted by
427 a land owner who simply tolerates their settling down on his land. This is an ordinary lease, like a *verumpattam*, but is called a *kudiyiruppu*.

Tenants were formerly at a great disadvantage vis a vis the *janmi*, as the latter was at liberty to evict them on the slightest pretext. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930, by protecting the tenant, and restricting the cases in which eviction is possible (such as the non-payment of rent for instance, or necessity for the land owner to have some land to cultivate himself), especially of the *kanamdar*, has made this a thing of the
[423] past. Dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of land ownership and
[464] land-tenure continues, however, and the present tendency goes so far as to want to protect the interests of the *verumpattam* tenants to the detriment of the *kanamdars* and *janmis* and even, in the last resort as we shall see, of the landless, agrarian labourers who constitute the vast army of the Kerala agrarian proletariat.

105 It is difficult to generalize about the distribution of agricultural roles
423 and interests among the various castes and communities in the state.
564 Schematically, it can be said, however, that generally Nambudri Brahmins are *janmis*, since, as mythology has it, Parasu Raman gave them the land in perpetual enjoyment. Commenting on this, one of my interpreters assured me that this was not mere idle belief. It was a fact, giving the Brahmins an unequivocal title to the land, in spite of there being "no legal document" confirming them in their ownership. Many Nayars, including Kshattriyas such as the rajas of Cochin and Travancore, Samantans such as the Zamorin, and some Tiyas and Moplas, are also owners of large tracts of land.

105 *Kanamdars* are usually recruited among the well-to-do Nayars and
564 Tiyas, but also among the big Mopla families. Other Moslems are
[427] *verumpattam* tenants, as are the majority of the Tiyas. These of course
[423] used to follow their traditional profession of *toddy* (fermented palm
[463] juice) tapping, but with the introduction of prohibition in the former
[464] Madras State, they have had to give it up, and mainly hire themselves out as labourers. Others who have always hired themselves out in this way, as an immemorial caste occupation, are the Cherumas and Pulayas, some free, but the vast majority tied to the land. Many Moplas, also, have no other means of subsistance.

105 The aborigipals in Kerala continue their wild life of beggars, food-
563 gatherers or primitive forest-clearers and agriculturalists. Some are ad-
463 dicted to witchcraft as are also members of some of the artisan castes,
454 and their activities give Kerala a strange, mysterious atmosphere of imponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.

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ponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.

5. POLYANDRY IN KERALA

During my stay in Kerala, I found that the following castes practise polyandry in the state: Nayars, Thandans, and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of north Cochin, Kammalans such as Tathans (goldsmiths), Karuwans, or Perinkollam (blacksmiths), Asaris (carpenters) and Puri-asaris (laterite-cutters), Musaris (bell-metal smiths of braziers); also the allied castes to these of Kolla-kurups (shampooers, masseurs, and leather-shield makers) and Vil-kurups(bow-makers), Tol-kollans (leather workers), Kanisans (astrologers), Mannans (washermen and barbers), Panans (exorcists and umbrella-makers), Pulluvans (herbalists and *nag* worship songsters). All follow *makkathayam* except the Nayars, who are *marumakkathayam* from one end of Kerala to the other.

Today, Nayars in Kerala are said, as we have seen (p. 92), to have ceased the practice of polyandry. Not only do they say so themselves, but other castes are emphatic on this point as well. Since, with the disappearance of the petty chieftains, Nayar militias no longer exist, the customs that were closely linked to these organizations have also faded away. The Mysore invasions perhaps had something to do with it, too, for Tipu Sultan was grimly determined to eradicate the Nayar armies and made this his principal objective. In 1788, before invading Malabar, in a proclamation which was intended, among other things, to be a warning to the people, he said: ". . . and since it is the practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery; and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts in the fields: I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and to be like the rest of mankind; and if you are disobedient to these commands, I have made repeated vows to honour the whole of you with Islam." (quoted by C. A. Innes, I.C.S. in *Malabar and Anjengo*, Madras District Gazeteers, p. 72). Many of the Moplas today, especially inland, are descendants of Nayars whom Tipu thus did "honour with Islam". They were forcibly circumcized and regaled with beef. Many, however, reconverted themselves later, but lost caste in the process and were never considered the same again.

In spite of it being said that Nayars are no longer polyandrous in Kerala, I was able to find, as I shall show further on, some families left

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who do still live matrimonially in this way. From a certain Musad (low-caste Nambudri Brahmin practising surgery) whom I met in Shoranur and who was introduced to me as someone well informed because, owing to his profession, he had access where others could not go, I heard that in the very closed Court circles of Cochin and Travancore polyandry of the old type is still practised by Nayar ladies, who consort with wealthy Tamil Brahmins and Pillais from the east coast. It would naturally have been far beyond the bounds of possibility for me personally to investigate the truthfulness of this allegation, and therefore it can only be given here for what it is worth.

Thandans and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of north Cochin practise polyandry of the fraternal type, and none other. They are *makkathayam*, and a regular wedding ceremony is usual in their case. Cross-cousin marriage, in which a woman marries her father's sister's son, her *machchunan* and all his brothers, is preferred if not compulsory. The ceremony is performed at the bride's house, after the preliminary exchange of bride-price and dowry have taken place between the two families involved, and consists of the girl and her bridegrooms being seated in a row and fed ritually on *kanji* (rice porridge) and coconut milk. The honeymoon of the newly wed also takes place at the home of the wife, her husbands going to her either each in turn or in a body. Later residence of the family is patrilocal.

Most Thandans and Tiyas of central Kerala used to be toddy tappers, as I have mentioned earlier (p. 172). This occupation, they say, they brought from Ceylon, from where they are reputed to have originated; they also profess to have brought from there the coconut palm tree and the practice of fraternal polyandry. The tradition is closely linked to that of the Kammalans whom I shall describe next, and there does seem to be some evidence of close ties with the great island to the south. To this day, many Thandans and Tiyas emigrate temporarily to Ceylon as labourers, and it is said, although the etymology may be fanciful as some authors insist, that Tiya is derived from *dvipa*, "island" in Sanskrit.

I found Thandan and Tiya polyandry quite active still in Walluvanad and in north Cochin. I had been led to believe that it was fast dying out and that only very few practised it any longer. But this was not my impression, especially in the taluk of south Malabar. In north Cochin, a recent enactment known as Act XVII of 1115 The Cochin Makkathayam Thiyya Act of 1940, had made polyandry illegal in future, and it is true that nine years after the coming into existence of the new legislation, only the older people still practised the ancient form of marriage.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Tiyas

We went first to the house of some rich Tiyas, in which we had been told that there were three elderly men living in polyandry. It was a large mansion standing in a well-kept compound, and we met one of the members of the older generation as well as a young man. When we asked them about their polyandry, they both shook their heads and protested that we had been "misinformed". Nobody in their family practised this marital custom, they said, although they admitted that the previous generation had done so. Since there was nothing we could do about it, and it would be useless to argue with such people, we went on. However, from the next house that we reached, we heard that what we had previously been told was correct and that these men did not tell us the truth. Because they were well off, they liked to play up at being "progressive", we heard, and therefore denied their polyandry which was nevertheless a fact.

The two tumbled-down, thatched houses which we next visited, stood in a very small compound in which plantain and coconut trees grew. Two old men, one very bald, and an aged lady, her flat bosoms hanging down dismally on her bare chest, came out to greet us. They were very hospitable and kind, and offered us fresh coconut milk from a nut, to drink. The younger of the two men, Raman, aged sixty five, volunteered to give us any information that we wished to obtain from him.

He told us that he and his two elder brothers, Shangu and Mundon, had been married to Chaki, the white haired old lady, for fifty years. Shangu, the eldest, had now been dead for three years, but Mundon, three years his junior, was alive at just seventy one. He was the other man, with the bald head. They lived in the larger of the two thatched houses. Kandapan, their third son, who was married to Lakshmi and had a small boy three years old, lived in the smaller house. They had only been married for four years, since "the last renewal".

This remark, it seemed, was an allusion to the rent. The latter consisted of a *kurikanam* lease, for which they paid three rupees a year (or the equivalent in bananas, they said), and a renewal fee of six rupees every twelve years. They had paid the latter four years ago, and it had gone to their *janmi*, a Nambudri Brahmin whose *illam* was called Granghat *illam*. By profession they were toddy tappers, but since the introduction of prohibition in Madras State, they had been deprived of their livelihood. It seemed that there was an inner belt of some miles within Cochin territory in which the distilling and sale of liquor was prohibited in order to prevent smuggling over the border, and that they, since their house was situated ten miles inland, were affected by this
regulation.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11

but then this influence made itself felt rather by conversions and personal dealings than by any direct, government action, as now.

Transport, which in Kerala had always been difficult, was also greatly changed. Modern facilities, such as good roads, ferries, bridges; later, motor cars, railways, engine-driven ships, boats and launches; and finally, aeroplanes, have put thousands of boatmen and cartmen out of work and have not only brought formerly isolated and inaccessible parts of the country into contact with the rest, but have also made important centres become within easy and rapid reach of each other. As in other parts of the world where it is impossible for race distinctions to be observed in a system of general transport, caste is overlooked in public transport in Kerala, and this fact has greatly contributed to breaking down traditional socio-religious pre-occupations in such matters.

With the institution of a regular method of dispensing justice through courts, caste was dealt a further blow; the European masters of India refused to treat individuals otherwise than as equals before the law. The judiciary personnel was recruited from all sections of the population, regardless of caste or creed. This measure, together with the new way in which government servants were enlisted, gave the more enlightened castes of Nayars and Tiyas their chance. The present eminence in public affairs which these two communities have attained is in a large measure due to the opportunities thus thrown open to them.

Education, of course, also had a lot to do with it. Instead of the old kind in which village teachers taught native lore and traditions in an unchanging, ageless fashion, European-type schools were opened and modern means of education became available to all who wished to take advantage of them. These methods may be criticised today, since independance in 1947, as being un-Indian and useless in the context of the national culture, but the fact remains that they brought great changes in the outlook of the people, especially among the middle classes, who have indisputably benefitted from them.

Liberal, learned professions began to be followed by many to whom such careers were not open before, and again, regardless of caste distinctions, lawyers, doctors and teachers appeared in large numbers in Kerala. Many of them soon travelled to other parts of India, where their reputation as able and knowledgeable practitioners has never ceased to grow. A large part of the Government of India's New Delhi office personnel is made up of men from Kerala, in both high and subordinate positions, especially Nayars, so much so, indeed, that the fact has become the subject of a standing joke.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

There appears to be no doubt that Thandans and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of the central area are gradually giving up polyandry. Others have reported on the speed with which it is disappearing, sometimes exaggerating the rapidity, it seems to me, but nevertheless correctly stating that not many more years will pass before the custom has become simply a memory, as it is with the Nayars. I think a distinction should be made, however, between the more wealthy, upper members of the caste and the lower, poorer ones. In fact, polyandry with the Thandans and Tiyas is being abandoned from the top, and this observation is valid not only for their community, but also for polyandry in general in Kerala.

It is the upper castes, who have had greater opportunity to educate themselves, adapt themselves to higher standards and lead a more modern, Europeanized type of life, who are giving it up as something primitive and unworthy of self-respecting citizens. Within the castes, however, it is not always the upper strata that has progressed in this way, as can be seen with the Nayars, where polyandry is reputed to be practised still in the conservative court circles of Cochin and Travancore. Among the Thandans and Tiyans it is the other way round, the upper class either professes not to follow the custom any longer or really abstains from doing so. The Kammalans and associated artisans nearly all continue to be polyandrous, and as they are without exception people of very slender means, a distinction such as the one made here does not apply.

Aiyappan, discussing new trends in the Irava community, has written: "Differences in occupations and income and the development of new sexual standards are two active forces that one sees in operation against polyandry." (*Iravas and Culture Change*, p. 103.) Iravas, according to him, had formerly very few avocations from which to choose. They pooled their resources and worked for the house, their common wife and their children, without making any individual reservations. Today, matters have changed and the men each want a different type of work, chosen from among the numerous new occupations which are open to them, and aspire to have their own family, wife and children. The old ways are no longer fashionable, and are even despised and considered to be primitive and barbarous. Jealousy thus reappears, and asserts itself in no uncertain way. The women, too, do not want to be shared any longer by a number of brothers, and prefer to return home or refuse polyandrous marriages rather than be joined in wedlock in the traditional manner. In North Cochin, however, it was the progress of the people in higher levels of the Thiyya caste that brought about a legal inter-

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snake-bite, the Nāyādis wear a brass toe-ring. And, when engaged in catching rats in their holes, they wear round the wrist a snake-shaped metal ring, to render them safe against snakes which may be concealed in the hole.

The Nāyādis who live within the jurisdiction of the Kavalapāra Nāyar near Shoranūr wear the kudumi (front lock of hair), as there are no Māppillas (Muhammadans) to molest them. The Kavalapara Nāyar was at one time an important chief, and directed all Nambutiri jenmis (landlords) who held land within his jurisdiction to bind themselves not to let the land to Māppillas. Nāyādis of other parts are not allowed by the Māppillas to wear the kudumi, and, if they do so, they are taken for Parayans and professional sorcerers, and beaten.

Some Nayādis have become converts to Christianity, others to Muhammadanism, and maintain themselves by begging for alms from Muhammadans. They are called Thoppyitta (cap-wearing) Nāyādis.

The priest of the Nāyādis is called Mūppan. His appointment is hereditary, and he enquires into all matters affecting the community, and can excommunicate a guilty person.*

Average height, 155 cm.; nasal index, 86.

Nāyar.—"The Nāyars," Mr. H. A. Stuart writes,† "are a Dravidian caste, or rather a community, for we find several distinct elements with totally different occupations among the people who call themselves by this title. The original Nāyars were undoubtedly a military body, holding lands and serving as a militia, but the present Nāyar caste includes persons who, by hereditary

* This note is based mainly on articles by Mr. S. Appadorai Aiyar and Mr. L. K. Anantha Krishna Aiyar.

† Madras Census Report, 1891.

101 occupation, are traders, artisans, oilmongers, palanquin-
174 bearers, and even barbers and washermen. The fact
564 seems to be that successive waves of immigration brought
[701] from the Canarese and Tamil countries different castes
[463] and different tribes; and these, settling down in the country, adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation
101 564 is going on even yet. Chettis of Coimbatore, for example, who settled in Palghāt and Valluvanād within living memory, have developed by this time into
[55] Nāyars. In the census schedules we find instances in which the males of a house affix the term Nāyar to their names, while the names of the females end in Chettichi. Gollas entering the country from the north have similarly, in course of time, assumed Nāyar customs and manners,
643 564 and are now styled Nāyars. Again the rājahs and chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or classes who had rendered them meritorious service to the rank of Nāyars. These men were thereafter styled Nāyars, but formed a separate sub-division with little or no communion with the rest of the Nāyar class, until at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin was forgotten. Nāyar may thus at present be considered to be a term almost as wide and general as Sūdra."

173 564 According to the Brāhman tradition, the Nāyar caste is the result of union between the Nambūdris with Dēva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women introduced by Parasurāma; and this tradition embodies the undoubted fact that the caste by its practice of hypergamy has had a very large infusion of Aryan blood. In origin the Nāyars were probably a race of Dravidian immigrants, who were amongst the first invaders of Malabar, and as conquerors assumed the position of the governing and

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mentioned in vernacular books, are Kiriyam, Illam, Svarupam, Itacheri or Idacheri, Pallichan, Ashtikkurichchi, Vattakātan, Otatu, Pulikkal, Vyapari, Vilakkitalavan, and Veluthetan. Of these Ashtikkurichchi and Pulikkal are divisions of Mārān, Vyapari is a division of Chettis, and Vilakkitalavan and Veluthetan are barbers and washermen respectively.

"The chief divisions of Nāyars, as now recognised, are as follows:—

1. Kiriyam, a name said to be a corruption of the Sanskrit griha, meaning house. This represents the highest class, the members of which were, in former times, not obliged to serve Brāhmans and Kshatriyas.

2. Illakkar.—The word illam indicates a Nambūtiri Brāhman's house, and tradition has it that every illam family once served an illam. But, in mediæval times, any Nāyar could get himself recognised as belonging to the Illam division, provided that a certain sum of money, called adiyara, was paid to the Government. The Illakkar are prohibited from the use of fish, flesh, and liquor, but the prohibition is not at the present day universally respected. In some parts of Malabar, they have moulded many of their habits in the truly Brāhmanical style.

3. Svarupakkar.—Adherents of the Kshatriya families of Travancore. The members of the highest group, Parūr Svarupam, have their purificatory rites performed by Mārāns. It is stated that they were once the Illakkar servants of one Karuttetathu Nambutiri, who was the feudal lord of Parūr, and afterwards became attached to the royal household which succeeded to that estate, thus becoming Parūr Svarupakkar.

4. Padamangalam and Tamil Padam were not originally Nāyars, but immigrants from the Tamil

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564 country. They are confined to a few localities in
[184] Travancore, and until recently there was a distinctive
[463] difference in regard to dress and ornaments between the Tamil Padam and the ordinary Nāyars. The occupation of the Padamangalakkar is temple service, such as sweeping, carrying lamps during processions, etc. The Tamil Padakkar are believed to have taken to various kinds of occupation, and, for this reason, to have become merged with other sections.

5. Vāthi or Vātti.—This name is not found in the Jatinirnaya, probably because it had not been differentiated from Mārān. The word is a corruption of vāzhti, meaning praying for happiness, and refers to their
[534] traditional occupation. They use a peculiar drum, called nantuni. Some call themselves Daivampatis, or wards of God, and follow the makkathāyam system of inheritance (in the male line).

6. Itacheri or Idacheri, also called Pantaris in
[234] South Travancore. They are herdsmen, and vendors of milk, butter and curds. The name suggests a relation of some kind to the Idaiyan caste of the Tamil country.

7. Karuvelam, known also by other names, such as
[644] Kappiyara and Tiruvattar. Their occupation is service in the palace of the Mahārāja, and they are the custodians of his treasury and valuables. Fifty-two families are believed to have been originally brought from Kolathanād, when a member thereof was adopted into the Travancore royal family.

8. Arikuravan.—A name, meaning those who reduced the quantity of rice out of the paddy given to them to husk at the temple of Kazhayakkuttam near Trivandrum, by which they were accosted by the local chieftain.

9. Pallichchan.—Bearers of palanquins for Brāhmans and Malabar chieftains. They are also employed

seems to have been reserved specially for them. It would be well worth the study of persons acquainted with other districts of the Presidency to ascertain whether somewhat similar functions to these (protection and supervision) did not originally appertain to the Kāvalgars of Tamil districts and the Kāpus in the Telugu country, for both of these words seem to have come from the same root as the Malayālam kānam. And it is significant that the Tamil word now used for proprietorship in the soil is kāni-yātchi, to which word the late Mr. F. W. Ellis in his paper on Mirasi Rights assigned a similar derivation."

The occupation of the Nāyars is described by Mr. N. Subramani Aiyar as "comprising all kinds of worldly pursuits. So late as the end of the eighteenth century, there were with the then Mahārāja of Travancore a hundred thousand soldiers, consisting of Nāyars and Chovas, armed with arrows, spears, swords and battle-axes. The chief occupation of the Nāyars is agriculture. Cultivation of a slipshod, time-honoured type is the forte of the Nāyar, for which he has always found time from times of old, though engaged in other occupations as well. In the Velakali, a kind of mock fight, which is one of the items of the utasom programme in every important temple in Malabar, the dress worn by the Nāyars is supposed to be their ancient military costume. Even now, among the Nāyars who form the Mahārāja's own Brigade, agriculture, to which they are enabled to attend during all their off-duty days, goes largely to supplement their monthly pay. Various other occupations, all equally necessary for society, have been, according to the Kēralavaḳasakrama, assigned to the Nāyars, and would seem to have determined their original sub-divisions. They are domestic servants in Brāhman

463 [357] and Kshatriya houses and temples, and deal in dairy produce, as well as being engaged in copper-sheet roofing, tile-making, pottery, palanquin-bearing, and so [178] on. But these traditional occupations are fast ceasing 872 under the ferment of a new civilisation. In the matter of education, the Nāyars occupy a prominent position. Almost every Nāyar girl is sent to the village school to learn the three R's, quite as much as a matter of [212] course as the schooling of boys. This constitutes a feature of Malabar life that makes it the most literate country in all India, especially in respect of the female 875 sex. After Rāmanujam Ezhuttachchan developed and enriched the Malayālam language, numerous Asans or village teachers came into existence in different parts of 873 Malabar. After a preliminary study of Malayālam, such as desired higher, *i.e.*, Sanskrit education, got discipled to an Ambalavāsi or a Sastri. Even to-day the estimable desire to study Sanskrit is seen in some Nāyar youths, who have readily availed themselves of the benefit of the local Sanskrit college. In respect of English education, the Nāyars occupy a prominent [658] position. The facility afforded by the Government of Travancore for the study of English is being largely availed of by Nāyars, and it is a matter deserving to be prominently recorded that, in recent years, several Nāyar girls have passed the Matriculation examination of the University of Madras."

212 181 It is noted, in the Gazetteer of Malabar, that "the Nāyars as a class are the best educated and the most advanced of the communities in Malabar (excepting perhaps the Pattar Brāhmans, who are not strictly a Malayālam class), and are intellectually the equals of [464] the Brāhmans of the East Coast. Many of them have risen to the highest posts in Government, and the caste

286 yard in width and 1½ or 2 yards long. They find it difficult to maintain themselves with this work and also rent small plots of land, and some possess land. They use the unimproved hand-loom. There is no co-operation among them. They sell their cloth in the adjoining market of the village and do not care to send it to other villages. At times they take orders. They do not spin but buy inferior yarn from the market which gets its supply from Bombay through Cochin and Calicut and at times Ponnāni.

463 *Other crafts.*—

Sawyers	4	families.
Carpenters	11	„
Copper workers	1	family.
Iron workers	2	families.
Goldsmiths	7	„
Masons	10	„

These give their whole time to the craft.

Native umbrellas and baskets are made by all Pariahs.

[283] Rope-making—thick as well as thin—is carried on by nearly all the women of the Tiyyas and their sub-sects. Some women are wholly engaged in this work and they sell their ropes in the market themselves. The Pariahs make a peculiar kind of rope from grass, which is used for tying calves, and as reins for bulls. The rope is good and strong. They sell a rope for a measure of rice.

Leather work is done by one family which also practises agriculture.

These craftsmen have existed from times long past with no change in their condition or tools. There is no co-operation among them. Their capital is only their tools. They get sufficient work for their maintenance. There is no improvement with regard to their designs except in the case of the goldsmiths whose work is daily increasing and who are the only craftsmen who invent designs. The condition of blacksmiths is getting worse on account of the importation of foreign iron goods. His only work now-adays is to fit things, not to make them as of yore. He does not now make the nails, screws, iron bars, locks, knives, etc. These are bought from the bazaar and he fits them. But he makes all the tools necessary for other crafts and for agriculture. The same is the case with the coppersmith, but he gets sufficient work as people desire to get valuable vessels made in their presence. But his condition may be regarded as precarious. There is no change in the other craftsmen.

[283] Coir rope-making is the chief source of income for all the low caste women. They beat the soft cover of the coconut, after it is well soaked, into fibre, and twist it into strands, and the strands into ropes, in their hands. The rope is sold to the local shop-keepers daily. Some women themselves take the rope to the local fairs. Their work is increasing.

245 The other industry followed by a great many people is coconut oil-pressing. The whole Christian community with some others subsists on that work. They become tenants to big kanomdars and sometimes buy coconuts from others and extract the oil and sell it in the local market. Some big shopkeepers collect the oil and send it in large quantities to Cochin whence it is exported. One machine mill is already at work in a place

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178 426 The increase in the number of families must not be taken for a sign of prosperity. I have sought out its causes. It has both a social and an economic cause. The breaking up of the old 'Tharvads' into small homesteads, owing to want of harmony among the members, mismanagement of property due to ignorance and rank illiteracy, growing indebtedness of the once rich Tharvads to the local money-lenders or the landlord, are the causes of the downfall of the great Tharvads of old which half a century ago were gracing this desam; the stories yet current in those parts of men of high worth and talents who belonged to them, and the occasional ruined foundations of their family houses alone remain. Indeed joint families have almost all broken up and the Tharvad properties all absorbed by the local 'Jenmis.' The people are day by day being reduced to want and dependence on the landlord and the creditor.

564 The desam cannot be called a 'caste' desam strictly speaking. There are no separate quarters allotted on the basis of caste difference. In spite of the rigorous observance of the 'system of pollution' between caste and caste, peculiar to the Malabar country, all castes hold lands, work, and have families promiscuously throughout the land. For example, every landholding farmer, who is usually a Nayar, has in his family precincts (indeed far enough away to be out of reach of pollution) small homesteads of his labourers who are generally Cherumas or Pulayas * by caste.

There are—

3	Brahman	families ...	24	individuals.
3	Ambalavasi	,, ...	36	,,
137	Nayar	,, ...	956	,,
85	Tiyya	,, ...	584	,,
80	Cheruma	,, ..	390	,,
24	Muhammadan	,, ...	27	,,
1	Christian family	...	6	,,

● [463] The *Tiyya* class includes the families of the artisans—'Asari' (carpenter—two families), 'Karuvan' (blacksmith—one family), 'Kollan' (shoemaker—two families), 'Thattan' (goldsmith—one family), 'Mannan' (washerman of the lower class—one family), 'Panikkan' (stone-mason—one family).

Children living	... ...	642		
,, dead	... ...	188	}	Born within the last ten years.
,, born lifeless	... ...	67	}	

Children below ten are alone included in this. This has been ascertained by enquiry among the mothers.

342 Homesteads number 266. The homesteads of the villagers are miserable looking and squalid, frequently being only mud hovels of eight by five feet, more or less. Not more than 40 houses out of 333 are houses worthy of the name. The rest are simply hovels, often the very picture of poverty and famine.

* Between these two depressed castes there are only minute differences.

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427 regulations in the sister states of Cochin* and Travancore, which have placed a decided check on the arbitrary dealings of the landlord over the tenant in those countries. The fear of governmental interference in the near future to regulate the relations of the landlord and the tenant (for it is well known that this problem is an old one in Malabar, and even as far back as 1885, the popular administration of Mr. Logan had made a draft regulation on the same subject which was only abandoned for want of adequate support by the country and which formed the basis on which Cochin and Travancore could afterwards proceed) has stimulated the process of converting kanom lands into verumpattam, i.e., tenure at will. By this the jenmi has a double advantage. The lands are under his direct ownership, and as they are given to cultivation by annual contracts, he can at any time refuse, withhold or do what he likes with his lands. The lands also being as it were put to auction, will produce a higher rate of income than would be the case by giving it on kanom tenure. There is also a recent tendency on the part of the jenmi to raise the kanom amounts because in Cochin and Travancore this is made the basis for the regulation of rent. Till now the policy was to give lands on a nominal kanom, the advantage being in the facility with which they might reclaim the lands at pleasure.

241 The Cherumas (the submerged class) are the agricultural labourers who neither own nor rent land. They work for their 465 masters who give them a meagre allowance of 2 edangalis, i.e., 1/5 para (the standard measure) of paddy. With this he supports his wife and family. They are attached to their masters and loath to leave them.

427 Rents are always paid in kind and are high enough particularly in the case of annual holdings. Eighty per cent of the produce will go as rent to the landowner. The sole advantage for which tenants take up lands are, they say, (1) a few days' maintenance after the harvest, (2) the possession of straw, and (3) employment. But sometimes they have to pay rent in money and this is chiefly in seasons of crop failure. This is met in these ways:—(1) Direct borrowing, (2) profit of garden cultivation and (3) the institution of chit-fund,† which is widely prevalent among them.

241 The barber and the washerman of the desam are illustrations of how customary occupations are modified by practical necessity. ●463 These people, while they perform their traditional occupations to the society and receive for it the fixed remunerations, have long taken to agriculture as their chief source of income. And they are among the chief farmers. There are two manufacturers of

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* Vide p. 116.

[454]

† [A chit-fund is similar to our Slate-clubs. The members meet periodically, usually every month, and each pays a defined sum into the fund. If it be an 'auction-chit,' the money so collected is given to the member who, not having received it previously, offers to give back the largest amount, e.g., if there be Rs. 100 in the chit, one member may offer to take Rs. 75 only. The remaining Rs. 25 is then divided among the other members. Security is then taken from the recipient of the Rs. 75 that he will continue to pay his monthly contributions till every member has had his turn. In the other variety of chit, the monthly sum is ballotted for. It is the same as Kuri, described on p. 124.—Ed.]

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241
463 toddy and jaggery and three carters who are mainly agriculturists.

651 The revenue for the year 1915-16 was Rs. 3,175-10-3. The assessment for fasli 1312 for the Amsam of Kothachira was Rs. 6,519-2-4. By settlement (fasli 1326) it is Rs. 11,228-7-0.

241 *Agriculture.*—We have mentioned elsewhere the names of the chief crops. Out of these, the two staple products are paddy and arecanut, the former being a field cultivation and the latter garden. The mainstay of the bulk of the population is arecanut. Every household of any worth is surrounded by an areca palm garden.

The method of cultivation pursued in both these is of an antiquated character.

245 1. *Arecanut.*—Mature fruits are selected for seeds. They are kept in pots and watered for one year. Next year they are planted and within a year and a half or so, they grow into young plants. Then they are transplanted into the gardens where they have to be grown. They are planted in parallel lines, the distance from one another varying from two to three yards. The plants are at first placed in pits measuring a cubic yard. Some cow dung and ash manure are put, and a watering is given on alternate days in the summer. During the monsoon they are left to themselves. When the plants grow up into trees, the pit is filled up and a shallow basin round it made just to contain a few gallons of water. These are renewed every year in the beginning of summer, small channels are cut across the gardens to bring water to the root of every tree, water-lifts are erected and regular watering begun. This will continue until the advent of the monsoon.

243 2. *Paddy.*—On the first shower of the monsoon, fields are given a hasty ploughing and seeds are thrown. A fortnight of average showers helps healthy sprouting and the ryot prays for similar weather for another two fortnights to come. By this time, they have grown up into healthy plants. Between the second and third month of their growth, they are carefully unrooted and planted in plots prepared by ploughing for the purpose. Between the fifth and sixth month after sowing comes the harvest. If there is a second crop, the land is again prepared for sowing immediately after harvest and the whole process repeated. For this crop, the ryot depends on the north-east monsoon which gives two months of heavy rain from the middle of November to the middle of January. After this harvest the fields lie fallow for a period of two or three months.

651 A table given in the next page will show the areas under single 134 and double crop, different soils, and the nature of the assessments 311 on each. (The information is taken from the village accounts.) The assessment given herein is the revised one after the re-settlement.

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use. No other manure is used. Green manure is not grown but is got from somewhere or other according to circumstances. Varatties are not made. Wood fuel is the only sort used. 241 [372]

Insect pests.—Of these, the most ruinous is the "Chazhi" the terror of the ryot. The chazhi is a small insect of the locust species half an inch long which in millions appear in a few seasons and spread desolation in the paddy fields. Two remedies are current against this pestilence: (1) catching them directly by drawing a cloth (which serves the purpose of a net) attached to two handsticks over the crops and thus killing them; (2) but by far the most efficacious remedy in the estimation of the cultivator is the putting of a talisman in the fields which a local conjurer (Mandravadi) has prepared for him. What chazhi is to paddy "Mahali" is to the arecanut, the only difference being that in this case nothing is believed to be possible to combat the calamity. 242 [789]

Cattle diseases are (1) hoof disease, (2) Koraladappan (swelling in the neck), (3) Thada (mumps), (4) obstruction of urine and dung, (5) sudden epileptic attacks, and other diseases whose causes and cure are unknown to the peasant. Poisoning is sometimes done by Paraiyas of neighbouring desams for the sake of getting the flesh. For beef is eaten only by this lowest class and when cattle die they will be called to remove the carcase. A number of cattle are annually destroyed by tigers also which often venture into the sheds of the peasants. Talismans and offerings to deities are conceived to be the only remedy. 232 [789]

No assistance is obtained from the Agricultural department, nor any from any veterinary doctor.

Wood is commonly got for all uses from private trees; but the forest also supplies sometimes wood for small necessities. For building purposes, wood is purchased—not from any fixed place. 313

Houses.—The depressed castes have miserable hovels for their houses. A mud wall of five feet height with a ruined roof which can protect the inmate neither from sun nor rain is the order of the day. 342

Except the palatial family homes of the two jenmis, there are no tiled houses. Terracing is not customary here. All other houses are thatched, and thatching is always of straw.

Most houses have gardens surrounding them, where arecanut trees, plantains, mango trees, jack, etc., are grown. They are joyful to look at. 351

The maximum distance of cultivated lands from the home of cultivator is one mile.

An acre of land costs from Rs. 200 to Rs. 300. But purchases on jenmi tenure are worth above Rs. 500. But it is impossible to acquire jenmam property except for jenmis; for the jenmis are jealous guardians of their lands and never sell lands once acquired. Direct threatenings and indirect intimidation are used by them to obtain the jenmam right of lands if held by any lesser landowner. 423 [435]

Subsidiary industries.—Neither weaving nor spinning have ever been practised in this desam. 463

Other crafts—

1. Arrack and jaggery making.
2. Ironsmith.

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3. Goldsmith.
4. Leathersmith.
5. Carpentry.
6. Masonry.
7. Oil pressing.
8. Making of bamboo mats, baskets, etc.
9. Trade in rice.
10. Butter and milk trade.

In arrack preparation two men (Tiyyas) are engaged, but they are also agriculturists and not more than two hours are spent on an average by them on their particular profession. They cut two or three trees daily and from the toddy thus got jaggery or arrack is made. The profit according to their own version is not more than three annas per day. The ironsmith, goldsmith, leathersmith, carpenter and stone mason are whole-time workmen. The ironsmith finds employment in making or repairing agricultural implements. Nothing above this is known to him. The goldsmith's work consists mainly of making ornaments for the jenmis. He is an expert as far as such ornaments are concerned. But beyond these customary works his genius does not go. The leathersmith gets hardly any orders for his work, but his wife supplies chunam* to the country whereby the family maintains a precarious existence. Carpenters and stone masons have work in some seasons. For example, in the ploughing time or the beginning of the watering season, the former has busy calls from every family for the repair of a plough, a water lift or the like. The stone mason wanders to other parts of the country in search of work. He has no work here. The average rate of wages for these is four annas a day and one meal. Goldsmiths' and ironsmiths' remuneration is based on the quality and quantity of their work. None of these have continuous employment for the whole year. Owing to this cause, out of the two families of carpenters consisting of ten members of workable age, eight migrate usually to Calicut where they get twelve annas wages per day. They pay occasional visits to their homes, stay there for a fortnight or so, and then again go.

[166]

The oil presses find ten or twelve days' work each year after a gingelly crop is cut.

285

Mat and basket making is the indoor industry of the Cheruma women. They help their husbands in the fields in minor works but sometimes are also employed on independent wages especially during harvest and sowing time. Their spare time is employed in this industry. These mats and baskets are made of split bamboo. They are rough productions.

252

There is a curious industry carried on by some Nayar men and women which illustrates the plight they are in. Each of them has a capital of two rupees. They go out with this ten or sometimes fifteen miles away and purchase paddy for this sum where it is sold cheaper by four nazhis (one-tenth para) a rupee. Next day it is boiled, dried and made into rice. On the third day it is carried to Kunnankulam or Guruvayoor, villages eight or ten miles to the

* [Slaked lime for chewing. It is spread thinly on betel leaves, which are folded when put in the mouth.—Ed.]

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other lowest classes pay in paddy for their purchases of salt, chillis, onions, kerosene oil and so on. Nearly 1,000 paras of paddy per annum are received in this way. The Cherumas probably spend about as much also in the toddy shop, and at least Rs. 600 worth of paddy is sold in the village to Cherumas, Panans, etc. The sale of paddy is not confined to the shop. The most important sales take place at the houses of the persons who have surplus paddy to sell. It is mostly purchased by Muhammadan traders and others from outside the village. 432

Economic condition.—Money wages range from three to six annas per day according to the nature of the work and the efficiency of the labourer. 465

The labourer cannot earn these wages regularly throughout the year, as employment is irregular and cannot be obtained at all during certain seasons. Though rice in the staple food, the poor cannot afford a full meal of solid rice a day; instead, they take it in the form of a thin gruel, occasionally supplemented by a better meal as after harvest or during the *Onam* festival, which is the great national festival of Malabar. In harvest time labourers get extra wages for reaping and threshing—usually 10 per cent of what they reap and thresh. A competent man then earns from one to one-and-a-half paras * of paddy a day for a few days. [804]

When wages are paid in kind it is usual to give from three to five edangalis. † Agricultural labourers are paid less. There is a sort of agricultural serfdom, the Cherumas being the victims. Of course it is not legally recognized and is breaking up. These Cherumas who do the greater part of agricultural work, are paid from one and half to two edangalis of grain, supplemented by certain allowances during sickness, festive occasions, women's lying-in, etc. A sort of feudal or patriarchal relationship prevails between these and their employers. They are attached to certain families and get work, or at any rate are paid, throughout the year. The standard of life among them is very low and most of them drink the toddy made in the village. They live in miserable hovels, and are physically and mentally very inefficient. But they are, to some extent, looked after by their masters, to whom in spite of ill-treatment, they are often very much attached. I have heard farmers saying that if these Cherumas left them they would be ruined, since the success of their cultivation, i.e., its profitableness under existing conditions, depends, they believe, on their cheap labour. In very recent times some of these Cherumas have begun to emigrate to other places attracted by the higher wages and better conditions of work. But this is uncommon owing to the covert opposition of their masters. 566

The Muhammadan coolies, who are superior both in skill and strength to the Hindus, earn higher wages, both because their labour is worth more, and because they are more independent. But their usual wages cannot be stated, as they contract for each job. Such work as splitting rocks, digging wells, splitting logs, and 563 463

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* [By Mr. Wood's tables (op. cit. p. 6), a para of paddy in this taluk weighs 22½ lb. Mr. Sundara Aiyar calculates it at 20 lb.—Ed.]

† [I.e., about 10 lb. weight of paddy, yielding about 7 lb. weight of raw rice.—Ed.]

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563 other work demanding skill or strength is mainly done by them.
463 Tney handle tools better than the Hindus. A strong Muhammadan coolie will carry sacks of grain of 8 paras weighing 160 lb. a distance of two miles half a dozen times in a day, a Hindu coolie will carry only half a sack.

462 *Women's work.*—In the better class families, especially the Brahman and higher Nayar families, women confine themselves to household business and looking after the children. Among the lower castes they work for their living. They help the men in agricultural work, such as transplanting seedlings, sowing, reaping and threshing. Rice husking is their special occupation, they also carry paddy from place to place on their heads. They are paid less than the men, three edangalis where men get four or five. Children also help in agricultural work and in looking after cattle, sheep and goats. Cheruma women work just like the men and get about the same wages. Some Nayar women go out to work in Brahman families.

435 Rice is the staple food, either by itself or in the form of kanji
[262] (a sort of watery gruel). Its price depends on that of paddy. The price of paddy is lowest after the first harvest in September, being 2 to 2½ paras (ten edangalis = one para) for one rupee. In about two months the price rises, and paddy sells at about 1¾ paras for a rupee. With the second harvest in December or January the price again falls, but rises gradually till July or August to its maximum height and grain is only 1·5 to 1·8 paras for a rupee. Towards the end of June 1916 it was only 1·6 for a rupee. Price fluctuations are greater or less according to weather conditions and outside demand. In August 1917 the price was 1·3 paras per rupee, and prices were still rising.

454 Not more than 5 per cent, or 20 families, mostly of the higher classes, have made savings.

Very little money is invested in agricultural or industrial capital of the productive kind except the ordinary farming stock. Some persons (foolishly) invest their money in Kanom land the value of which largely depends on the goodwill of the landlord. Few are rich enough to buy land in absolute ownership.

Savings-bank accounts are unknown. No one apparently has any.

426 Loans to neighbours is a popular and common way of utilizing savings, especially loans to agriculturists for short periods on high interest, 12 to 24 per cent. Even higher interest is obtained by speculative loans on grain. Thus before harvest a poor peasant may borrow grain for a month, repaying 102 or 102½ measures for 100 measures borrowed.

301 Most saving families possess some jewellery and other movable
454 goods worth about one-eighth to half of their total capital, an obvious attraction to thieves in former years. The amount of jewellery is deceptive as a test of prosperity.

454 Savings are utilized also for the purchase of houses, gardens, and increased consumption. Under this head should also be mentioned small investments in what are called 'Kuris' (chit-funds).

426 The majority of the villagers are in debt, for smaller or larger
735 amounts. During certain seasons of the year many families